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SUBJECT: MONTENEGRIN PARLIAMENT PRESIDENT IN ROME

Classified By: Classified by David D. Pearce, Political Minister Counselor, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. On February 16, President of the Montenegrin Parliament Ranko Krivokapic visited Rome ostensibly for personal reasons. He took the opportunity, however, to lobby contacts in Italy's Center-Left opposition parties and the Vatican to oppose a possible request by EU Envoy Miroslav Lajcak to impose a requirement that a referendum on independence must be approved by 55 percent of the voter turnout. End summary.

12. (C) On February 16, Krivokapic traveled to Rome for personal reasons. During the visit, however, he met informally with contacts at the Holy See, Montenegrin expatriates, and members of the Center-Left parties in Italy. Krivokapic, a staunchly pro-independence and influential politician, told poloff that the Montenegrin Government was analyzing EU Envoy Lajcak's recent request that a Montenegrin referendum on independence be approved by 55 percent of the turnout. According to Krivokapic, the request was undemocratic and unacceptable.

13. (C) According to Krivokapic, the Montenegrin Government has complied with all of Lajcak's recommendations on election monitoring, media non-interference by the ruling coalition, and transparency in the deliberations leading up to the announcement of the referendum. Krivokapic stated that the Montenegrin Government was even prepared to accept a request that independence needed to be approved by 40 percent of all registered voters. A requirement for 55 percent of the turnout, however, would mean a difference of several thousand votes in what is expected to be a large turnout. He claimed that denying victory to a majority of the voters, no matter how small the margin, would lead to instability - the opposite of what Lajcak intends to achieve by imposing a qualified majority requirement.

14. (C) Krivokapic told poloff that the injustice of such a request is so plainly obvious, that any EU leader presented with the facts will be forced to agree. He said he intended to present his case to as many EU politicians as possible in the period before the Montenegrin Government makes its final determination on the date of the referendum. Krivokapic stated that the Montenegrin Government would prefer to come to an agreement with the EU on the conditions and terms of the referendum - without declaring a predetermined benchmark for victory - and presenting the numerical results to the EU. In this case, he believed it would be difficult for EU members to deny victory to the majority.

¶5. (C) Comment. Although Krivokapic insisted he was on a personal visit, it was anything but informal. He arrived in Rome with an impressive entourage - a bodyguard, a secretary, and two advisors - all of whom hovered nearby as he sipped coffee at one of Rome's pricier hotel coffee shops. Krivokapic believes that the EU has not actively followed Lajcak's work. As a result, he has fallen under the undue influence of EU Political Director Javier Solana, whom the Montenegrins consider a historical foe of Montenegrin independence. Until such time as the EU takes a more directive line with Montenegro, Krivokapic will likely increase his international visibility to lobby against the 55 percent qualified majority request.

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